I asked the general whether he intended to make a tour of inspection. Smiling, he put his wrinkled hand on my shoulder and said, "Yes, I shall make the tour, but after you, and in a different way. You are lucky—there are no rules of procedure for commissars. With a commander of an army, this is different. I am bound to hurt somebody if I break the conventional rules. You can start your tour with the worst units and tell your men directly why you have come to see them first. But can a commander of the army say to a division commander, 'I am here because your division is behaving like hell'?"

A PLEDGE OF DISCIPLINE

The Lettish battalions were not united in regiments but served as reinforcement to regular infantry divisions. They had their own political organization, the Executive Committee of Lettish Tirailleurs, independent of the Iskosol. I called a meeting of this Committee and asked about the relations between the Lettish Tirailleurs and the Twelfth Army. "Rightly or wrongly, the rest of the army distrusts you. What can we do to improve the situation?"

The leaders of the battalions complained about false rumors. What could they do against lies and slander? I suggested that the misunderstanding could be dispelled by a joint campaign for unity of the Russian and Lettish troops. With the chairman of the Committee, I made a tour of the battalions. Meetings of soldiers and officers were called. I asked the men whether they considered themselves soldiers of the Russian army or had other ideas about their role at the front. The answer was that the Letts had no other desire than to get along with the rest of the army. They were offended that their loyalty was suspect. Then I asked, "Is it true that you have passed a resolution to end the war by fraternization? Wasn't this the reason for your clash with the Iskosol?"

The Letts explained that they had never taken the resolution seriously. There was some fraternization in their battalions but not more than in the Russian regiments. The Germans, they said, knew too well that the Letts were their archenemies. If the army decided against fraternization, the Letts would be the last to run counter to that decision.

I could not judge the military quality of the Lettish troops, but they showed themselves in orderly formation, their barracks were clean, their trenches well maintained, and both men and officers had an appearance of military fitness. After the tour I proposed to the Lettish leaders that they reaffirm their loyalty to the government